

CMST 4118/SOCL 4402 Marriage and Family Communication

Fall 2018, TTh 9:00-10:20, Coates 237



Instructor Information

Instructor

Dr. Sanela Elli Osmanovic

Email

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Office Location & Hours

Coates 136A; T-Th 8:00-9:00,
10:30-12:00, or by appt

General Information

Description

CMST 4118 is a course designed to familiarize students with family interaction, where communication among family members is examined through a range of theoretical perspectives. In the process, students identify in what way family relationships influence our identity, self-concept, attitudes and beliefs. The course is designed to teach students to analyze how their own communication practices have been affected by their family experiences, and understand how the diversity of family situations leads to different communication patterns—thus increasing both self-awareness and tolerance. With the broad overview of both theory and practices in family communication, CMST 4118 provides an opportunity for students to further develop, enhance, and maintain positive family relationships.

Expectations and Goals

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the communication in families. By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Understand major theories, concepts, and research findings in family communication.
2. Recognize and evaluate common communication patterns in family interaction.
3. Explain how the stresses of family life vary across social circumstances.
4. Understand the effects of infidelity and abuse.
5. Develop a deeper level of understanding of their own families.

Course Requirements

Required Text

Honeycutt, J. (2018). *Communication Diversity in Families*. Cognella Inc.

Purchase your course material here: <https://store.cognella.com/81839-1A-002>

****Additional course readings will be posted on Moodle.**

Assignments

Students will be graded on their work on:

- **Semester project (120 points).** Students will **choose one** of the following options for the semester project:
 - **Research paper:** This option involves conducting original research in family communication (with the possible use of the Matchbox Lab and the family members video library), and writing a 20-page research paper on the topic.
 - **Intergenerational gaming project:** This option involves playing video games (mobile or in-person) with an older family member two hours a week for six weeks, followed by an interview with the family member, and a 6-8-page paper discussing the student's and older family member's experiences.
 - **Family service learning volunteer project:** This assignment requires students to volunteer 16 hours throughout the semester with a local group or organization that serves families in some way, and write a 6-8-page paper detailing the experience.

Further details on each option will be provided on Moodle.

- **Family oral history paper (80 points).** Students will be tasked with conducting a one-hour personal interview with an older family member. After the interview, students will write a paper (minimum 4 pages), analyzing the family member's experiences, and discussing their own findings and revelations as they connect to the course topics. The detailed guidelines on the oral history paper will be provided on Moodle.
- **Midterm genogram project (50 points).** Students will choose their own or a fictional family, and draw a genogram, covering four generations and graphing marriages, the number of children in each marriage, and birth order. Students may hand draw the genogram or use software to do the drawing. Based on the genogram, students will write a 3-page paper commenting on patterns and changes in patterns over the generations. These patterns can be communication issues, health issues, longevity, occupations, geographical location, religion and spirituality, ethnicity, conflict and divorce, and family disorders (e.g. violence). Looking for at least three patterns, students should discuss how we benefit from knowing about our families-of-origin, what they learned from doing the genogram and what they would want their family to learn from the assignment. Further details will be posted on Moodle.
- **Discussion leadership (50 points).** Each student will sign up to be a class discussion leader on one week's topic, and tasked with finding one research article that stirs their interest and pertaining to the week's topic. This article will be sent to me, and I will post it on Moodle as required reading for that week. With 9 discussion weeks during the semester, we will have 2-3 students assigned to lead the discussion each week. The students can choose to work together or separately, making sure they read the assigned material, compare/connect it with the book chapter, and create a list of talking points on the topics. The talking points will serve as discussion starters in the classroom. The discussion leaders will assure the conversation flows and the discussion is thoughtful and substantive.
- **Final group video project (100 points).** At the beginning of the semester, the class will be randomly assigned into groups of four. Based on topics covered during the semester and class discussions on issues modern families face, the groups will work together to prepare a 10-minute video resource (explainer video) that can be used to enhance family functioning. The video presentation grade will be based on the innovativeness of the idea (choose something that is not already widely known), the incorporation of family communication theories, neatness and professionalism of work, the creativity, and the peer reviews. The detailed guidelines on the group presentation will be provided on Moodle.
- **Class participation (100 points).** As our class will revolve around discussion, insight, and sharing, the participation grade will come from the presence in the classroom (5 points per week) and the participation in and contribution to the discussion (5 points every discussion week).

Final grades will be determined based on scores earned in these assignments. All work must be done during the semester and not made up after the fact.

Course Assignment	Percentage of the Grade	Maximum Points
Discussion leadership	10%	50
Midterm genogram	10%	50
Oral history report	16%	80
Attendance and participation	20%	100
Final group video project	20%	100
Semester project	24%	120
Total	100%	500 points

Grading Scale

A+	97-100
A	93-96.99
A-	90-92.99
B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99
B-	80-82.99
C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99
C-	70-72.99
D+	67-69.99
D	63-68.99
D-	60-62.99
F	59.99 and below

Please note, in accordance with the Federal Buckley Amendment, grades will **not** be discussed through email, over the phone or in class. You **must** discuss a grade in person during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving the grade. After 2 weeks, discussion and changes to grades will **not** be possible. This means do **not** come at the end of the semester about a grade from the first week of class.

Classroom Decorum

As this class largely consists of dialogue, in-class exercises, and group discussion, please respect the work, opinions, and the presentations of your classmates.

- Listen to conversations, participate in them. Show support. You will be required at one point or the other to provide feedback to your peers.
- Do not use your phone during the class. Contrary to popular belief, the world is not going to collapse if you don't check your messages and social media for an hour.
- Do not use personal computers, tablets, and similar devices during the group discussions. You will learn how to deal with a distracted audience, but you don't need to play the part of that audience for your classmates.
- Be on time. Do not disrupt your classmates' dialogue with your late arrival.
- Controversial subjects may arise. Be open-minded and allow the conversation to progress.

Course Schedule (Tentative)

Week 1	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 08/21	Introductions, syllabus	Read the syllabus, buy the book
Thu, 08/23	Observational activity	
Week 2	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 08/28	Defining communication and family	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 08/30	Group assignments and discussion leadership signups	
Week 3	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 09/04	Theoretical perspectives on family	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 09/06	Theoretical perspectives on family discussion	Check Moodle for details
Week 4	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 09/11	Family roles and rules	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 09/13	Family roles and rules discussion	Check Moodle for reading
Week 5	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 09/18	Family histories; telling stories	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 09/20	Family histories; telling stories discussion	Check Moodle for reading
Week 6	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 09/25	Family oral history paper due	Check Moodle for details
Thu, 09/27	Fall Break, no class	
Week 7	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 10/02	Family closeness and intimacy	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 10/04	Family closeness and intimacy discussion	Check Moodle for reading
Week 8	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 10/09	Sibling and intergenerational communication	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 10/11	Sibling and intergenerational communication discussion	Midterm genogram project due
Week 9	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 10/16	Family diversity and culture	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 10/18	Family diversity and culture discussion	Check Moodle for reading

Week 10	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 10/23	Family conflict, power, and violence	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 10/25	Family conflict, power, and violence discussion	Check Moodle for reading
Week 11	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 10/30	Family stress and stressors	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 11/01	Family stress and stressors discussion	Check Moodle for reading
Week 12	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
11/06-11/08	<i>Conference, no class</i>	Final group video project due
Week 13	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 11/13	Societal influences on the family	Check Moodle for reading
Thu, 11/15	Future of the family discussion	Check Moodle for reading
Week 14	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 11/20	Video project presentations	Check Moodle for grading rubric
Thu, 11/22	<i>Thanksgiving, no class</i>	
Week 15	Topic/Activity	Week's assignments
Tue, 11/27	Video project presentations	
Thu, 11/29	Make-up work	Semester project due

Additional Information and Resources

Attendance and Participation

Attendance will be taken every class. Your attendance at each class meeting is expected. You are expected to attend all classes just as you would be expected to go to work every day if this was any other job.

Plagiarism

There will be no tolerance for plagiarism. You are to assume that all assignments in this course are individual assignments unless explicit instructions are provided for a group project. Any student found to have presented material not their own (either downloaded from the internet or written by another student) will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students. The Internet has made plagiarism very easy and very tempting. Hundreds of sites offer papers, research, writing, and editing. The ease with which such material is available over the Internet does not lessen the seriousness of claiming material from the Internet as your own. See the LSU policies on plagiarism here:

<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html>.

Extra Credit

Extra credit assignments may be scheduled and can only be submitted in the allocated time period. No end-of-the-semester, last minute extra credit assignments will be given.

Missed Work

Sometimes life just happens and you are unable to turn in an assignment on time (maybe you are stressed out, overwhelmed by other assignments in other classes, got drunk the night before and slept through your alarm, etc...). I will accept late work, but with a penalty. If you can't make an assignment deadline, you can turn the assignment in for **increasingly fewer points** throughout that day, up **until 11:59pm CST**. After that point, work will be accepted within the following week for the **maximum grade of a C** (see below for extenuating circumstances). After 7 days, late work will no longer be accepted for credit. (Life happens, but not without consequences.)

Extenuating circumstances: I reserve the right to accept late work without penalty when a student has provided **proper documentation** of a university sanctioned emergency or conflict that has inhibited them from turning in an assignment on time. University sanctioned emergencies or conflicts include: family death/emergency, debilitating sickness, religious observance, serious weather conditions, varsity athletic competition, sanctioned curricular requirements with documentation, court-imposed legal obligations. For more information on university policy on student absences, see <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/22/>.

Students with disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states: "If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations can be arranged." After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

Do you have a major?

Business leaders and other professionals recognize the importance of developing communication skills and analysis. Alan Greenspan, for example, stated, "To succeed, you will soon learn, as I did, the importance of a solid foundation in the basics of education - literacy, both verbal and numerical, and communication skills." We hope this course contributes to your success.

To learn more about communication, you may want to major or minor in the Department of Communication Studies. The program explores how people sustain and change, experience, and make sense of the world through symbolic action. Students develop conceptual skills to analyze written, oral, and visual messages. Students gain practical experience in such areas such as public speaking, group decision-making, performance, and film. Such skills are elemental to careers in business, government, law, social services, and the arts.

A major in Communication Studies requires 36 hours including 12 hours of core classes and 12 hours at the 3000 or 4000 level. A minor requires 15 hours with one core class and 6 hours at the 3000 level or above.

More information is available at www.lsu.edu/cmst or by contacting our undergraduate advisor Mr. Kent Filbel (kfilli@lsu.edu), whose hours are posted at his office, 135 Coates Hall.